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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002931

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SUBJECT: MOWAFUQ AL-RUBBAIE ON SHIA AND SECURITY

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In an August 10 meeting with the Ambassador and DCM, Iraqi National Security Advisor Mowafuq al-Rubaie discussed the Prime Minister's reservations about the use of force in the Baghdad Security Plan. Additionally, Rubaie acknowledged that there have been discussions about removing Speaker Mashhadani from his post, and that PM Maliki is having difficulties with VP Tariq al-Hashimi. On JAM activities, Rubaie shared the Ambassador's concerns regarding increased rocket attacks in the Green Zone. He claimed that most JAM members are "mainstream" and open to dialogue. Finally, Rubaie warned of misconceptions that the USG is anti-Shia. End Summary.

Baghdad Security Plan

¶2. (C) Rubaie told the Ambassador that PM Maliki has been reluctant to allow the use of force in connection with the Baghdad Security Plan. For example on August 9, the Prime Minister was presented with two possible military operations.

He agreed to the first with the caveat that no air power could be used and collateral damage had to be minimized. Rubaie said MNF-I refused to accept the prohibition on the use of air power and the mission was canceled. Maliki also blocked the second mission because Moqtada al-Sadr had promised to deliver the mission's target to Iraqi police. According to Rubaie, Maliki wants to give reconciliation time to work and is therefore reluctant to use military force. While open to letting the PM use his influence to find non-military means to address the problems in Sadr City, the Ambassador expressed concern that Maliki may be making it too difficult for Coalition Forces to enforce the Baghdad security plan, and warned this may lead to the conclusion that the Prime Minister is not committed to Baghdad security.

Rubaie said that he would pass this view on to the Prime Minister.

¶3. (C) Rubaie also questioned the Coalition's strategy of focusing on several troubled neighborhoods, establishing security there first, and then gradually expanding the zones of security. He argued that a better plan would be to focus attention on those neighborhoods most impacted by internally displaced persons, such as Adamiyah. He estimated that there is a three to five month window during which security must be established for there to be any hope of success. The underlying problem is a lack of political will to stop the violence.

Mashhadani's Future

¶4. (C) Rubaie acknowledged discussion about replacing Council of Representatives Speaker Mashhadani. He questioned whether the "shock" of forcing Mashhadani out would outweigh the benefits of doing so. According to Rubaie, Mashhadani has an uninhibited personality which leads him to say unwise things. He said that in his opinion Mashhadani is not

ill-intentioned, but rather, an unsophisticated demagogue in the Qaddafi style. Rubaie indicated that the Iraqi Islamic Party's Osama al-Tikriti might be a good replacement for the Speaker.

Tariq al-Hashimi and Maliki

15. (C) Rubaie said that Prime Minister Maliki lacks support from the Iraqi political establishment. In particular, he is being undermined by Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi. Al-Hashimi frequently writes critical letters to the Prime Minister and includes Rubaie on the cc line. Noting that Al-Hashimi and Maliki are currently not on speaking terms, Rubaie criticized the Sunni VP for undermining the Prime Minister.

Green Zone Rocket Attacks

16. (C) The Ambassador expressed his concern regarding a recent upsurge in rocket attacks on the International Zone. Rubaie agreed that this is a problem, saying "it is unacceptable." He said that the Chinese-made rockets which are now being used are highly effective. The attackers are now using factory-manufactured launchers instead of homemade launchers. The Ambassador noted Maliki's own concern that some rockets have even passed over his house. Rubaie claimed that the rockets are being launched by a splinter group within the Jaysh al Mahdi (JAM), but not by JAM itself. He speculated that Hezbollah may also be involved in the rocket attacks.

"Mainstream JAM"

17. (C) Rubaie estimated that 80 percent of JAM's membership

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consists of "mainstream" elements open to peaceful dialogue. Coalition forces should take care not to alienate all Shia by going after JAM too aggressively. He estimated that only 5 percent of JAM is dangerous, and that these elements include common criminals as well as former Baathists who have now joined JAM.

"Misconceptions" Among the Shia

18. (C) Rubaie said that there is a feeling of concern among Iraqi political leaders that Washington may "change gears" on Iraq policy, particularly with regard to the Shia. Even among the educated Shia there is a widespread "misconception" that the USG is targeting them and unfairly attacking Shia militias. He identified two parts to the problem. First is Shia insecurity, a perception rooted in the Shia history of persecution and victimhood. Second is the Iranian influence in the Shia community. Rubaie said that the Shia need to dislodge themselves from Iranian influence and develop a long term strategic relationship with the United States.

Need for Dialogue

19. (C) Rubaie agreed with the Ambassador on the need to reinvigorate dialogue among the Iraqi parties to increase political will to decrease the violence. Rubaie said VPs Abdul Mahdi and al-Hashimi should both be partners in this effort, as well as DPM Saleh. Rubaie also argued in favor of including the Sadrists, in addition to SCIRI, the IIP, Fadhila, and the Kurdish parties.

KHALILZAD